

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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Results received this week from the State Virus Laboratory confirmed seven deer mice collected in the city limits of Loma Linda, Yucaipa and Mentone tested positive for Hantavirus, which if transmitted to humans can result in hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), a rare but sometimes fatal disease.

HPS is caused by a virus that can be transmitted to humans through contact with the droppings of wild mice, primarily deer mice. Breathing small particles of mouse droppings that have been stirred up into the air is the most common means of infection. The illness starts with fever, headache, and muscle ache, and progresses rapidly to severe difficulty in breathing and, in some cases, death.

Since HPS was first identified in 1993, there have been 43 cases in California and over 380 cases nationally. About 25 percent of HPS cases identified in California were fatal. The last case of HPS in San Bernardino County was in 2003 in a resident from Highland. The patient survived.

Jim Felten, San Bernardino County Public Health Director, reports that "Hantavirus is endemic throughout California and San Bernardino County. Vector Control Program staff have routinely captured and tested rodents in local parks and recreation areas since hantavirus first emerged as an infectious disease threat. Since testing began in the county in the mid-1990s through last year, 33 of 413 rodents tested, about eight percent, have tested positive for Hantavirus. In 2004, four of 81 rodents tested positive".

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County Administrative Officer

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These recent infected rodents were captured last March and April adjacent to Hulda Crooks Park in Loma Linda near the flood control channel; at the western edge of Yucaipa Regional Park; and, at the eastern end of Newport Street in Mentone. The test results were received from the State Laboratory on June 27th.

“The likelihood of exposure to Hantavirus while in an outdoor, open environment such as a park is extremely low”.

To prevent HPS, Felten recommended the following:

- Avoid areas, especially indoors, where wild rodents are likely to have been present.
- Do not provide incentives (e.g., open food containers) for rodents to enter living or camping areas.”
- Wear plastic gloves and spray areas contaminated with rodent droppings and urine with diluted bleach. Place the waste in double plastic bags, each tightly sealed, and discard in the trash. Wash hands thoroughly afterward.
- Do not touch or handle live rodents and wear gloves when handling dead rodents. Spray dead rodents with diluted bleach and dispose of in the same way as droppings. Wash hands thoroughly after handling dead rodents.
- Keep rodents out of buildings by removing stacked wood, rubbish piles, and discarded junk from around homes and sealing any holes where rodents could enter. Keep food in tightly sealed containers and store away from rodents.
- If there are large numbers of rodents in a home or other buildings, contact a pest control service to remove them.

- For additional information on preventing HPS, please view County's Public Health Web Site at: <http://www.sbcounty.gov/pubhlth/> or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hanta/hps/index.htm>